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ABSTRACT

SANGAMON STATE UNIVERSITY HAS BEEN DIRECTED TO BE: (1) A LIBERAL ARTS INSTITUTION, (2) A PUBLIC AFFAIRS INSTITUTION, (3) A TEACHING INSTITUTION, AND (4) AN INNOVATIVE INSTITUTION. THE FACT THAT THE UNIVERSITY HAS BEEN ASKED TO BECOME WHAT EVERY UNIVERSITY AUTOMATICALLY SHOULD BE POINTS TO THE GENERAL PROBLEM OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN AMERICA TODAY. THE LIBERAL ARTS ARE NO LONGER RELEVANT. RESEARCH HAS REPLACED TEACHING AS THE BASIS FOR REWARDS AND UNIVERSITY PEOPLE HAVE BECOME SPECIALISTS IN SMALL TRUTHS. INTEREST IN PUBLIC AFFAIRS HAS GENERALLY BEEN LIMITED TO VOLUNTARY PUBLIC SERVICE ON THE PART OF A FEW, INSTEAD OF AN INSTITUTIONAL FOCUS ON SOCIAL PROBLEMS, AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF A PUBLIC PHILOSOPHY THAT WILL ASSIST STUDENTS IN SETTING PRIORITIES FOR THEIR LIVES, COMMUNITIES, AND GOVERNMENT. TEACHING SHOULD HELP LEAD THE STUDENT NOT ONLY TO A DISCOVERY OF THE SUBJECT MATTER AND ITS IMPLICATION FOR SOCIETY, BUT ALSO OF HIMSELF AS A HUMAN BEING. TO BE INNOVATIVE, AN INSTITUTION MUST BE RESPONSIVE TO THE NEEDS OF SOCIETY AND ITS STUDENTS AND LOYAL TO LIBERAL LEARNING. SANGAMON STATE UNIVERSITY AIMS TO FOSTER THE MORAL, AS WELL AS THE INTELLECTUAL, VIRTUES. (AF)

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REMARKS OF PRESIDENT ROBERT C. SPENCER
SANGAMON STATE UNIVERSITY
NOVEMBER 12, 1969

At Kick-off luncheon for million-dollar fund raising effort for the Committee on Higher Education for Central Illinois
St. Nicholas Hotel, Springfield

I have been asked to say something appropriate for the occasion which brings us together today, an occasion which asks another act of generosity from an already generous and spirited community. This is the occasion of the start of the public solicitation phase of the million dollar fund raising drive for the Committee on Higher Education for Central Illinois. In the lexicon of the marketing experts my words today should be a "pep talk", or "rally" for the salesmen regarding the products or services of their firm, a kind of final working of steam so all sellers will go forth, inspired, and reap sales, and in our case, gifts, which exceed all quotas. Hopefully, this we shall do, but in so doing I must note a peculiar situation which few salesmen of the business world must face. That is, few people among those present here, are sure of what we are selling, and I would judge that at the moment, their enthusiasm is wrapped up in happy thoughts of things new - a new community college and a new university for Springfield. And these thoughts are authentically related to an American tradition - a tradition which says that education will somehow save us, and will lead us to fulfillment in many personal and professional ways, to green pastures even.

I should like to reflect with you for a few minutes on the implications of these dreams of education, then you can, if you wish, identify better with the product you are asking others to buy in your efforts to

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raise funds for the land acquisition program for Lincoln Land Community College and Sangamon State University.

We should ask, first of all, what are the expections of higher education these days? What do we see it bringing to our communities? Will it bring things which add meaning to our lives, our leisure, and our work, or will it bring only the well-known discomforts of student unrest, of faculty alienation from the community, a dreary housing boom and a merely routine or mediocre fulfillment of the tasks of teaching and preparation of young people for the world of work?

I pose these alternatives, not to discourage you, but to suggest that in building educational institutions, unlike the development of the production line in manufacturing, where the blending of human energies, machinery, and technical skills make for more predictable and profitable outcomes, the ends we seek to accomplish, the product we seek to develop. in higher education depends upon the kind of people we gather for our tasks. We must assemble a community of teachers and scholars who are not only professionally and technically competent, but who are persons of humanity, of culture, and of literacy. In short, we must gather together a group of educated men and women. This is not as simple as it looks, since not all persons who have been schooled have also been educated, and not all people who have been educated are able to teach, to represent humanity and culture, in the way which is appropriate to the college and the university.

In pressing this discussion further, I propose to speak chiefly of Sangamon State University because, to this point, the missions of both Lincoln Land Community College and of the university are nearly identical. We should note that in many respects it is less the community college than

the university which has been giving us trouble these days, and our mandate from the Board of Higher Education and from the Board of Regents asks us to respond to the troubles which beset our universities and communities, not simply to build another like all the rest, with the problems of all the rest.

Most of us here know and think of education in three broad categories ...the education we got...the education we missed...and the education or lack of it which our children are receiving. Each experience, past or present, has produced in our lives its own frustrations and concerns. Indeed many of us are anxious that our children, of whatever age they are, receive educational opportunity superior to what we ourselves received, so that they will be able to make up or somehow encompass what we have missed in our own education and understanding of ourselves and our world. Noting for the moment that it is never too late for Dad and Mom to return to school, let us examine the education we need today, and in so doing I shall speak directly to the mission of Sangamon State University.

First, we have been asked by our governing boards to display in the design of our programs and style of operation, four major notes, or themes: we must be a liberal arts institution; we must be a public affairs institution; we must be a teaching institution; and we must be an innovative institution. We should ask right now, in response to these notes: What has happened to the liberal arts that we must be told to practice them? What has happened to our relations to the community and to the world that we must be told to be concerned with public affairs? What has happened to teaching that we must be told to teach? And what has happened to the inventiveness we have associated with higher education and university life, that we must be told to be innovative?

Our answers to these questions touches not only upon the problems of the university but upon problems of the quality in American life today. If we listen carefully to the thoughtful critics of higher education we learn that the liberal arts are no longer relevant or, as they are delivered to the students, they are so encrusted with narrow scholarship and pedantic techniques, as to have lost their impact on the mind, and the cultivation of the broad humane learning we once associated with higher education in the liberal arts.

A further look at the internal life of the university shows that its systems of rewards and punishments have recognized the publishing scholar more than the teaching scholar and in so doing has exchanged too often the cultivation of the intellectual life with the promotion of narrow specialization leading only to publication. Without exaggerating we could say that university people have become specialists in small truths, less than in the large truths which provide guideposts to living, which are capable of providing men with the wisdom and spirit required to change the world they live in, rather than to exploit it with selfish pursuit of limited goals.

This brings us to our concern with public affairs. At one time it was the solemn obligation of the educated man to return to his community, in service, the fruit of his wisdom and learning, whether by voluntary service, by leadership in public employment, or by service in elected office. This was the true meaning of the Res Publica - the "public things" which were the obligation of the nobility in Greek and Roman times. If we look about us in Springfield, we find the machinery of many of our institutions works only because of the dedication of such persons to voluntary, public service. But public affairs is not merely public service, it should, in higher education, be the group of studies which bridges the higher learning

with social needs and problems. If we, in university life, do not take time to study and teach the difficult questions facing our cities, our environments, of water, air, and of natural resources, we have neglected our duty to the community, and our obligations to public things. Moreover, these difficult questions are not only of the technical and practical order, they are also of the moral and philosophical order, an arena in which the universities of the past played an important role, and the great ones today continue to do so. So, in a real sense, the mandate of Sangamon State requires that we concern ourselves with the public questions and assist our students in developing what Walter Lippman has called the public philosophy, which will assist us in setting priorities for our own lives, for our communities and for our governments, in attacking the problems of justice, of the quality of human life, and of human survival in a deteriorating environment.

Third, we have been asked to be a teaching institution. And this is the charge which hurts those of us who have tried so hard on our own to make higher education an exciting and humane experience for our students. Teaching, of course, is not possible without a concern for the taught; it is not simply the skills associated with delivering information. Moreover, good teaching always takes the student from where he is, with his confused motives, feelings, and clouded identity, to the discovery not only of his subject matter and of the world of learning, but of himself as a learner and a human being. We at Sangamon State intend to build a teaching institution, an institution in which the style of inquiry, of dialogue with students, the style and method of addressing problems and seeking answers, is productive of the three ends of humane learning, literacy, and culture, as our new Vice President for Academic Affairs, George Cohen, describes our work. This means we shall ask our students to combine their pursuit of

the sciences, the social sciences, and the humanities with direct concerns about where this knowledge will lead them, and what its implications are for personal growth and community and human welfare. We shall ask, also, that teaching and learning be linked to the world of work, and during the student's work term in government, in schools, in private agencies or in business firms in Springfield and central Illinois, that they learn from their community about its everyday tasks, its professional life, and, of course, its problems and unmet needs. So teaching and learning should, at Sangamon State, involve far more than the classroom, the seminar and the library. It will embrace the community as well, providing at the sane time a very practical means to help young people find themselves, through the discipline of employment, before being formally launched, as is too often the case, without meaningful work experiences, upon graduation from college.

Finally, we have asked to be an innovative institution. It now occurs to me that if we do the things we have just described, and do them well, we shall be an innovative institution. We shall be innovative not because we have invented new ways of learning, or new fashions in relevance , but because we have restored to the university its very old mission of teaching, of teaching the liberal arts, and of relating these things to public needs. There will be less need, therefore, to graft into our curriculum special programs dealing explicitly with urban affairs, or black studies, or the philosophy of science and man, or other programs in the rage for relevance now besetting so many institutions of higher education. We shall be doing these things as a matter of course, because the educated man needs to know history, his world, and his science, with the kind of honesty and perspective which avoid the need for add-ons to the curriculum.

If being innovative, therefore, means being relevant to the needs of the world, means being responsive to the needs of the student, and being loyal to liberal learning and the duty to teach, we shall indeed be an innovative institution. But we shall, at the same time, be both very old and very modern in what we are doing.

Finally, I should like to quote from a wise man, a statement relating to the problem of connecting learning to action. Charles Peguy, a French thinker, had a deep concern with the difficulties inherent in trying to make the world a better place. He saw too many human institutions and parties failing not because the right choices were not available, or because men were not educated or concerned, but because men were not brave.

Peguy said: "If a man does possess truth, he must also be a brave man. A brave man, and so far there are not many", Peguy observes," who for the sake of truth, breaks with his friends and with his interests. Thus, a new party (and I might add an action organization - or a university) is formed, originally and supposedly the party of justice and truth, which in less than no time becomes absolutely identical with other parties - a party (or in our case, a university) just like all the others, as vulgar, as gross, as unjust, and as false. But of these men", Peguy adds, "of those who make a second break, there are hardly any left. And yet the life of an honest man must be an apostasy and a perpetual desertion, the honest man must be a perpetual renegade. The life of an honest man must be a perpetual infidelity. For the man who wishes to remain faithful to truth must make himself continually unfaithful to all of the continual, successive, indefatigable, renascent errors. And the man who wishes to remain faithful to justice must make himself continually unfaithful to inexhaustibly triumphant injustices." So, it takes courage if you do

possess the truth to make it work in the world. So it takes courage to be an honest man, as it should be to be an educated man in the late 20th Century.

I can only add in concluding that we hope the environment we create at Sangamon State University will foster more than the intellectual virtues. It must also, if our work is to have its effect, foster the moral virtues of courage and prudence so that liberal learning and concern for public affairs are not lost because individuals lacked that practical know-how and respect for their communities which enabled them to translate their concerns and education into an effective and courageous professional and community life.

This is how we see our task. I hope it is meaningful to you during this campaign effort as advocates of our cause, and as our neighbors for some years to come in the Springfield community. We hope in doing our work to being to the Springfield community an institution which by its style and in its commitments to teaching, to liberal studies, and to public affairs, will become an institution which will grace this community with the academic life it deserves - an institution of humanity, of literacy,.and of culture.

Before closing I wish to thank specifically on behalf of President Poorman and myself the busy people who have already given of their time and energy to the Committee on Higher Education in Central Illinois, Mr. George Hatmaker, Mr. Chuck Johnson, and Mr. Milton Friedland, to mention only a few. Thank you.